

# Causes of Discontent eBook

## Causes of Discontent by Charles Dudley Warner

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



# Contents

<a href="#">Causes of Discontent eBook.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Table of Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Page 1.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Page 2.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Page 3.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Page 4.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Page 5.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Page 6.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Page 7.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Page 8.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Page 9.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Page 10.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Page 11.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Page 12.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Page 13.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>

# Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
SOME CAUSES OF THE PREVAILING DISCONTENT		1



# Page 1

## SOME CAUSES OF THE PREVAILING DISCONTENT

By Charles Dudley Warner

The Declaration of Independence opens with the statement of a great and fruitful political truth. But if it had said:—"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created unequal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," it would also have stated the truth; and if it had added, "All men are born in society with certain duties which cannot be disregarded without danger to the social state," it would have laid down a necessary corollary to the first declaration. No doubt those who signed the document understood that the second clause limited the first, and that men are created equal only in respect to certain rights. But the first part of the clause has been taken alone as the statement of a self-evident truth, and the attempt to make this unlimited phrase a reality has caused a great deal of misery. In connection with the neglect of the idea that the recognition of certain duties is as important as the recognition of rights in the political and social state—that is, in connection with the doctrine of laissez faire —this popular notion of equality is one of the most disastrous forces in modern society.

Doubtless men might have been created equal to each other in every respect, with the same mental capacity, the same physical ability, with like inheritances of good or bad qualities, and born into exactly similar conditions, and not dependent on each other. But men never were so created and born, so far as we have any record of them, and by analogy we have no reason to suppose that they ever will be. Inequality is the most striking fact in life. Absolute equality might be better, but so far as we can see, the law of the universe is infinite diversity in unity; and variety in condition is the essential of what we call progress—it is, in fact, life. The great doctrine of the Christian era—the brotherhood of man and the duty of the strong to the weak—is in sharp contrast with this doctrinarian notion of equality. The Christian religion never proposed to remove the inequalities of life or its suffering, but by the incoming of charity and contentment and a high mind to give individual men a power to be superior to their conditions.

It cannot, however, be denied that the spirit of Christianity has ameliorated the condition of civilized peoples, cooperating in this with beneficent inventions. Never were the mass of the people so well fed, so well clad, so well housed, as today in the United States. Their ordinary daily comforts and privileges were the luxuries of a former age, often indeed unknown and unattainable to the most fortunate and privileged classes. Nowhere else is it or was it so easy for a man to change his condition, to satisfy his wants, nowhere else has he or had he such advantages



## Page 2

of education, such facilities of travel, such an opportunity to find an environment to suit himself. As a rule the mass of mankind have been spot where they were born. A mighty change has taken place in regard to liberty, freedom of personal action, the possibility of coming into contact with varied life and an enlarged participation in the bounties of nature and the inventions of genius. The whole world is in motion, and at liberty to be so. Everywhere that civilization has gone there is an immense improvement in material conditions during the last one hundred years.

And yet men were never so discontented, nor did they ever find so many ways of expressing their discontent. In view of the general amelioration of the conditions of life this seems unreasonable and illogical, but it may seem less so when we reflect that human nature is unchanged, and that which has to be satisfied in this world is the mind. And there are some exceptions to this general material prosperity, in its result to the working classes. Manufacturing England is an exception. There is nothing so pitiful, so hopeless in the record of man, not in the Middle Ages, not in rural France just before the Revolution, as the physical and mental condition of the operators in the great manufacturing cities and in the vast reeking slums of London. The political economists have made England the world's great workshop, on the theory that wealth is the greatest good in life, and that with the golden streams flowing into England from a tributary world, wages would rise, food be cheap, employment constant. The horrible result to humanity is one of the exceptions to the general uplift of the race, not paralleled as yet by anything in this country, but to be taken note of as a possible outcome of any material civilization, and fit to set us thinking whether we have not got on a wrong track. Mr. Froude, fresh from a sight of the misery of industrial England, and borne straight on toward Australia over a vast ocean, through calm and storm, by a great steamer,—horses of fire yoked to a sea-chariot,—exclaims: "What, after all, have these wonderful achievements done to elevate human nature? Human nature remains as it was. Science grows, but morality is stationary, and art is vulgarized. Not here lie the 'things necessary to salvation,' not the things which can give to human life grace, or beauty, or dignity."

In the United States, with its open opportunities, abundant land, where the condition of the laboring class is better actually and in possibility than it ever was in history, and where there is little poverty except that which is inevitably the accompaniment of human weakness and crime, the prevailing discontent seems groundless. But of course an agitation so widespread, so much in earnest, so capable of evoking sacrifice, even to the verge of starvation and the risk of life, must have some reason in human nature. Even an illusion—and men are as ready to die for an illusion as for a reality—cannot exist without a cause.



## Page 3

Now, content does not depend so much upon a man's actual as his relative condition. Often it is not so much what I need, as what others have that disturbs me. I should be content to walk from Boston to New York, and be a fortnight on the way, if everybody else was obliged to walk who made that journey. It becomes a hardship when my neighbor is whisked over the route in six hours and I have to walk. It would still be a hardship if he attained the ability to go in an hour, when I was only able to accomplish the distance in six hours. While there has been a tremendous uplift all along the line of material conditions, and the laboring man who is sober and industrious has comforts and privileges in his daily life which the rich man who was sober and industrious did not enjoy a hundred years ago, the relative position of the rich man and the poor man has not greatly changed. It is true, especially in the United States, that the poor have become rich and the rich poor, but inequality of condition is about as marked as it was before the invention of labor-saving machinery, and though workingmen are better off in many ways, the accumulation of vast fortunes, acquired often in brutal disregard of humanity, marks the contrast of conditions perhaps more emphatically than it ever appeared before. That this inequality should continue in an era of universal education, universal suffrage, universal locomotion, universal emancipation from nearly all tradition, is a surprise, and a perfectly comprehensible cause of discontent. It is axiomatic that all men are created equal. But, somehow, the problem does not work out in the desired actual equality of conditions. Perhaps it can be forced to the right conclusion by violence.

It ought to be said, as to the United States, that a very considerable part of the discontent is imported, it is not native, nor based on any actual state of things existing here. Agitation has become a business. A great many men and some women, to whom work of any sort is distasteful, live by it. Some of them are refugees from military or political despotism, some are refugees from justice, some from the lowest conditions of industrial slavery. When they come here, they assume that the hardships they have come away to escape exist here, and they begin agitating against them. Their business is to so mix the real wrongs of our social life with imaginary hardships, and to heighten the whole with illusory and often debasing theories, that discontent will be engendered. For it is by means of that only that they live. It requires usually a great deal of labor, of organization, of oratory to work up this discontent so that it is profitable. The solid workingmen of America who know the value of industry and thrift, and have confidence in the relief to be obtained from all relievable wrongs by legitimate political or other sedate action, have no time to give to the leadership of agitations which require them to quit work, and destroy industries, and attack the social order upon which they depend. The whole case, you may remember, was embodied thousands of years ago in a parable, which Jotham, standing on the top of Mount Gerizim, spoke to the men of Shechem:



## Page 4

“The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, ‘Reign thou over us.’

“But the olive-tree said unto them, ‘Should I leave my fatness wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?’

“And the trees said to the fig-tree, ‘Come thou and reign over us.’

“But the fig-tree said unto them, ‘Should I forsake my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?’

“Then said the trees unto the vine, ‘Come thou and reign over us.’

“And the vine said unto them, ‘Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?’

“Then said the trees unto the bramble, ‘Come thou and reign over us.’

“And the bramble said to the trees, ‘If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.’”

In our day a conflagration of the cedars of Lebanon has been the only result of the kingship of the bramble.

In the opinion of many, our universal education is one of the chief causes of the discontent. This might be true and not be an argument against education, for a certain amount of discontent is essential to self-development and if, as we believe, the development of the best powers of every human being is a good in itself, education ought not to be held responsible for the evils attending a transitional period. Yet we cannot ignore the danger, in the present stage, of an education that is necessarily superficial, that engenders conceit of knowledge and power, rather than real knowledge and power, and that breeds in two-thirds of those who have it a distaste for useful labor. We believe in education; but there must be something wrong in an education that sets so many people at odds with the facts of life, and, above all, does not furnish them with any protection against the wildest illusions. There is something wanting in the education that only half educates people.

Whether there is the relation of cause and effect between the two I do not pretend to say, but universal and superficial education in this country has been accompanied with the most extraordinary delusions and the evolution of the wildest theories. It is only necessary to refer, by way of illustration, to the greenback illusion, and to the whole group of spiritualistic disturbances and psychological epidemics. It sometimes seems as if half the American people were losing the power to apply logical processes to the ordinary affairs of life.

## Page 5

In studying the discontent in this country which takes the form of a labor movement, one is at first struck by its illogical aspects. So far as it is an organized attempt to better the condition of men by association of interests it is consistent. But it seems strange that the doctrine of individualism should so speedily have an outcome in a personal slavery, only better in the sense that it is voluntary, than that which it protested against. The revolt from authority, the assertion of the right of private judgment, has been pushed forward into a socialism which destroys individual liberty of action, or to a state of anarchy in which the weak would have no protection. I do not imagine that the leaders who preach socialism, who live by agitation and not by labor, really desire to overturn the social order and bring chaos. If social chaos came, their occupation would be gone, for if all men were reduced to a level, they would be compelled to scratch about with the rest for a living. They live by agitation, and they are confident that government will be strong enough to hold things together, so that they can continue agitation.

The strange thing is that their followers who live by labor and expect to live by it, and believe in the doctrine of individualism, and love liberty of action, should be willing to surrender their discretion to an arbitrary committee, and should expect that liberty of action would be preserved if all property were handed over to the State, which should undertake to regulate every man's time, occupation, wages, and so on. The central committee or authority, or whatever it might be called, would be an extraordinary despotism, tempered only by the idea that it could be overturned every twenty-four hours. But what security would there be for any calculations in life in a state of things in expectation of a revolution any moment? Compared with the freedom of action in such a government as ours, any form of communism is an iniquitous and meddlesome despotism. In a less degree an association to which a man surrenders the right to say when, where, and for how much he shall work, is a despotism, and when it goes further and attempts to put a pressure on all men outside of the association, so that they are free neither to work nor to hire the workmen they choose, it is an extraordinary tyranny. It almost puts in the shade Mexican or Russian personal government. A demand is made upon a railway company that it shall discharge a certain workman because and only because he is not a member of the union. The company refuses. Then a distant committee orders a strike on that road, which throws business far and wide into confusion, and is the cause of heavy loss to tens of thousands who have no interest in any association of capital or labor, many of whom are ruined by this violence. Some of the results of this surrender of personal liberty are as illegal as illogical.



## Page 6

The boycott is a conspiracy to injure another person, and as such indictable at common law. A strike, if a conspiracy only to raise wages or to reduce hours of labor, may not be indictable, if its object cannot be shown to be the injury of another, though that may be incidentally its effect. But in its incidents, such as violence, intimidation, and in some cases injury to the public welfare, it often becomes an indictable offense. The law of conspiracy is the most ill-defined branch of jurisprudence, but it is safe to say of the boycott and the strike that they both introduce an insupportable element of tyranny, of dictation, of interference, into private life. If they could be maintained, society would be at the mercy of an, irresponsible and even secret tribunal.

The strike is illogical. Take the recent experience in this country. We have had a long season of depression, in which many earned very little and labor sought employment in vain. In the latter part of winter the prospect brightened, business revived, orders for goods poured in to all the factories in the country, and everybody believed that we were on the eve of a very prosperous season. This was the time taken to order strikes, and they were enforced in perhaps a majority of cases against the wishes of those who obeyed the order, and who complained of no immediate grievance. What men chiefly wanted was the opportunity to work. The result has been to throw us all back into the condition of stagnation and depression. Many people are ruined, an immense amount of capital which ventured into enterprises is lost, but of course the greatest sufferers are the workmen themselves.

The methods of violence suggested by the communists and anarchists are not remedial. Real difficulties exist, but these do not reach them. The fact is that people in any relations incur mutual obligations, and the world cannot go on without a recognition of duties as well as rights. We all agree that every man has a right to work for whom he pleases, and to quit the work if it does not or the wages do not suit him. On the other hand, a man has a right to hire whom he pleases, pay such wages as he thinks he can afford, and discharge men who do not suit him. But when men come together in the relation of employer and employed, other considerations arise. A man has capital which, instead of loaning at interest or locking up in real estate or bonds, he puts into a factory. In other words, he unlocks it for the benefit partly of men who want wages. He has the expectation of making money, of making more than he could by lending his money. Perhaps he will be disappointed, for a common experience is the loss of capital thus invested. He hires workmen at certain wages. On the strength of this arrangement, he accepts orders and makes contracts for the delivery of goods. He may make money one year and lose the next. It is better for the workman that he should prosper, for the fund of capital accumulated is that upon which they depend to give them wages in a dull time. But some day when he is in a corner with orders, and his rivals are competing for the market, and labor is scarce, his men strike on him.

## Page 7

Conversely, take the workman settled down to work in the mill, at the best wages attainable at the time. He has a house and family. He has given pledges to society. His employer has incurred certain duties in regard to him by the very nature of their relations. Suppose the workman and his family cannot live in any comfort on the wages he receives. The employer is morally bound to increase the wages if he can. But if, instead of sympathizing with the situation of his workman, he forms a combination with all the mills of his sort, and reduces wages merely to increase his gains, he is guilty of an act as worthy of indictment as the strike. I do not see why a conspiracy against labor is not as illegal as a conspiracy against capital. The truth is, the possession of power by men or associations makes them selfish and generally cruel. Few employers consider anything but the arithmetic of supply and demand in fixing wages, and workmen who have the power, tend to act as selfishly as the male printers used to act in striking in an establishment which dared to give employment to women typesetters. It is of course sentimental to say it, but I do not expect we shall ever get on with less friction than we have now, until men recognize their duties as well as their rights in their relations with each other.

In running over some of the reasons for the present discontent, and the often illogical expression of it, I am far from saying anything against legitimate associations for securing justice and fair play. Disassociated labor has generally been powerless against accumulated capital. Of course, organized labor, getting power will use its power (as power is always used) unjustly and tyrannically. It will make mistakes, it will often injure itself while inflicting general damage. But with all its injustice, with all its surrender of personal liberty, it seeks to call the attention of the world to certain hideous wrongs, to which the world is likely to continue selfishly indifferent unless rudely shaken out of its sense of security. Some of the objects proposed by these associations are chimerical, but the agitation will doubtless go on until another element is introduced into work and wages than mere supply and demand. I believe that some time it will be impossible that a woman shall be forced to make shirts at six cents apiece, with the gaunt figures of starvation or a life of shame waiting at the door. I talked recently with the driver of a street-car in a large city. He received a dollar and sixty cents a day. He went on to his platform at eight in the morning, and left it at twelve at night, sixteen hours of continuous labor every day in the week. He had no rest for meals, only snatched what he could eat as he drove along, or at intervals of five or eight minutes at the end of routes. He had no Sunday, no holiday in the year.

## Page 8

Between twelve o'clock at night and eight the next morning he must wash and clean his car. Thus his hours of sleep were abridged. He was obliged to keep an eye on the passengers to see that they put their fares in the box, to be always, responsible for them, that they got on and off without accident, to watch that the rules were enforced, and that collisions and common street dangers were avoided. This mental and physical strain for sixteen consecutive hours, with scant sleep, so demoralized him that he was obliged once in two or three months to hire a substitute and go away to sleep. This is treating a human being with less consideration than the horses receive. He is powerless against the great corporation; if he complains, his place is instantly filled; the public does not care.

Now what I want to say about this case, and that of the woman who makes a shirt for six cents (and these are only types of disregard of human souls and bodies that we are all familiar with), is that if society remains indifferent it must expect that organizations will attempt to right them, and the like wrongs, by ways violent and destructive of the innocent and guilty alike. It is human nature, it is the lesson of history, that real wrongs, unredressed, grow into preposterous demands. Men are much like nature in action; a little disturbance of atmospheric equilibrium becomes a cyclone, a slight break in the levee 'a crevasse with immense destructive power.

In considering the growth of discontent, and of a natural disregard of duties between employers and employed, it is to be noted that while wages in nearly all trades are high, the service rendered deteriorates, less conscience is put into the work, less care to give a fair day's work for a fair day's wages, and that pride in good work is vanishing. This may be in the nature of retaliation for the indifference to humanity taught by a certain school of political economists, but it is, nevertheless, one of the most alarming features of these times. How to cultivate the sympathy of the employers with the employed as men, and how to interest the employed in their work beyond the mere wages they receive, is the double problem.

As the intention of this paper was not to suggest remedies, but only to review some of the causes of discontent, I will only say, as to this double problem, that I see no remedy so long as the popular notion prevails that the greatest good of life is to make money rapidly, and while it is denied that all men who contribute to prosperity ought to share equitably in it. The employed must recognize the necessity of an accumulated fund of capital, and on the other hand the employer must be as anxious to have about him a contented, prosperous community, as to heap up money beyond any reasonable use for it. The demand seems to be reasonable that the employer in a prosperous year ought to share with the workmen the profits beyond a limit that capital, risk, enterprise, and superior skill can legitimately claim; and that on the other hand the workmen should stand by the employer in hard times.

## Page 9

Discontent, then, arises from absurd notions of equality, from natural conditions of inequality, from false notions of education, and from the very patent fact, in this age, that men have been educated into wants much more rapidly than social conditions have been adjusted, or perhaps ever can be adjusted, to satisfy those wants. Beyond all the actual hardship and suffering, there is an immense mental discontent which has to be reckoned with.

This leads me to what I chiefly wanted to say in this paper, to the cause of discontent which seems to me altogether the most serious, altogether the most difficult to deal with. We may arrive at some conception of it, if we consider what it is that the well-to-do, the prosperous, the rich, the educated and cultivated portions of society, most value just now.

If, to take an illustration which is sufficiently remote to give us the necessary perspective, if the political economists, the manufacturers, the traders and aristocracy of England had had chiefly in mind the development of the laboring people of England into a fine type of men and women, full of health and physical vigor, with minds capable of expansion and enjoyment, the creation of decent, happy, and contented homes, would they have reared the industrial fabric we now see there? If they had not put the accumulation of wealth above the good of individual humanity, would they have turned England into a grimy and smoky workshop, commanding the markets of the world by cheap labor, condemning the mass of the people to unrelieved toil and the most squalid and degraded conditions of life in towns, while the land is more and more set apart for the parks and pleasure grounds of the rich? The policy pursued has made England the richest of countries, a land of the highest refinement and luxury for the upper classes, and of the most misery for the great mass of common people. On this point we have but to read the testimony of English writers themselves. It is not necessary to suppose that the political economists were inhuman. They no doubt believed that if England attained this commanding position, the accumulated wealth would raise all classes into better conditions. Their mistake is that of all peoples who have made money their first object. Looked at merely on the material side, you would think that what a philanthropic statesman would desire, who wished a vigorous, prosperous nation, would be a strong and virile population, thrifty and industrious, and not mere slaves of mines and mills, degenerating in their children, year by year, physically and morally. But apparently they have gone upon the theory that it is money, not man, that makes a state.

## Page 10

In the United States, under totally different conditions, and under an economic theory that, whatever its defects on paper, has nevertheless insisted more upon the worth of the individual man, we have had, all the same, a distinctly material development. When foreign critics have commented upon this, upon our superficiality, our commonplaceness, what they are pleased to call the weary level of our mediocrity, upon the raging unrest and race for fortune, and upon the tremendous pace of American life, we have said that this is incident to a new country and the necessity of controlling physical conditions, and of fitting our heterogeneous population to their environment. It is hardly to be expected, we have said, until, we have the leisure that comes from easy circumstances and accumulated wealth, that we should show the graces of the highest civilization, in intellectual pursuits. Much of this criticism is ignorant, and to say the best of it, ungracious, considering what we have done in the way of substantial appliances for education, in the field of science, in vast charities, and missionary enterprises, and what we have to show in the diffused refinements of life.

We are already wealthy; we have greater resources and higher credit than any other nation; we have more wealth than any save one; we have vast accumulations of fortune, in private hands and in enormous corporations. There exists already, what could not be said to exist a quarter of a century ago, a class who have leisure. Now what is the object in life of this great, growing class that has money and leisure, what does it chiefly care for? In your experience of society, what is it that it pursues and desires? Is it things of the mind or things of the senses? What is it that interests women, men of fortune, club-men, merchants, and professional men whose incomes give them leisure to follow their inclinations, the young men who have inherited money? Is it political duties, the affairs of state, economic problems, some adjustment of our relations that shall lighten and relieve the wrongs and misery everywhere apparent; is the interest in intellectual pursuits and art (except in a dilettante way dictated for a season by fashion) in books, in the wide range of mental pleasures which make men superior to the accidents of fortune? Or is the interest of this class, for the most part, with some noble exceptions, rather in things grossly material, in what is called pleasure? To come to somewhat vulgar details, is not the growing desire for equipages, for epicurean entertainments, for display, either refined or ostentatious, rivalry in profusion and expense, new methods for killing time, for every imaginable luxury, which is enjoyed partly because it pleases the senses, and partly because it satisfies an ignoble craving for class distinction?



## Page 11

I am not referring to these things as a moralist at all, but simply in their relation to popular discontent. The astonishing growth of luxury and the habit of sensual indulgence are seen everywhere in this country, but are most striking in the city of New York, since the fashion and wealth of the whole country meet there for display and indulgence,—New York, which rivals London and outdoes Paris in sumptuousness. There congregate more than elsewhere idlers, men and women of leisure who have nothing to do except to observe or to act in the spectacle of Vanity Fair. Aside from the display of luxury in the shops, in the streets, in private houses, one is impressed by the number of idle young men and women of fashion.

It is impossible that a workingman who stands upon a metropolitan street corner and observes this Bacchanalian revel and prodigality of expense, should not be embittered by a sense of the inequality of the conditions of life. But this is not the most mischievous effect of the spectacle. It is the example of what these people care for. With all their wealth and opportunities, it seems to him that these select people have no higher object than the pleasures of the senses, and he is taught daily by reiterated example that this is the end and aim of life. When he sees the value the intelligent and the well-to-do set upon material things, and their small regard for intellectual things and the pleasures of the mind, why should he not most passionately desire those things which his more fortunate neighbors put foremost? It is not the sight of a Peter Cooper and his wealth that discontents him, nor the intellectual pursuits of the scholar who uses the leisure his fortune gives him for the higher pleasures of the mind. But when society daily dines upon his senses the lesson that not manhood and high thinking and a contented spirit are the most desirable things, whether one is rich or poor, is he to be blamed for having a wrong notion of what will or should satisfy him? What the well-to-do, the prosperous, are seen to value most in life will be the things most desired by the less fortunate in accumulation. It is not so much the accumulation of money that is mischievous in this country, for the most stupid can see that fortunes are constantly shifting hands, but it is the use that is made of the leisure and opportunity that money brings.

Another observation, which makes men discontented with very slow accumulation, is that apparently, in the public estimation it does not make much difference whether a man acquires wealth justly or unjustly. If he only secures enough, he is a power, he has social position, he grasps the high honors and places in the state. The fact is that the toleration of men who secure wealth by well known dishonest and sharp practices is a chief cause of the demoralization of the public conscience.

## Page 12

However the lines social and political may be drawn, we have to keep in mind that nothing in one class can be foreign to any other, and that practically one philosophy underlies all the movements of an age. If our philosophy is material, resulting in selfish ethics, all our energies will have a materialistic tendency. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that, in a time when making money is the chief object, if it is not reckoned the chief good, our education should all tend to what is called practical, that is, to that which can be immediately serviceable in some profitable occupation of life, to the neglect of those studies which are only of use in training the intellect and cultivating and broadening the higher intelligence. To this purely material and utilitarian idea of life, the higher colleges and universities everywhere are urged to conform themselves. Thus is the utilitarian spirit eating away the foundations of a higher intellectual life, applying to everything a material measure. In proportion as scholars yield to it, they are lowering the standard of what is most to be desired in human life, acting in perfect concert with that spirit which exalts money making as the chief good, which makes science itself the slave of the avaricious and greedy, and fills all the world with discontented and ignoble longing. We do not need to be told that if we neglect pure science for the pursuit of applied science only, applied science will speedily be degraded and unfruitful; and it is just as true that if we pursue knowledge only for the sake of gain, and not for its own sake, knowledge will lose the power it has of satisfying the higher needs of the human soul. If we are seen to put only a money value on the higher education, why should not the workingman, who regards it only as a distinction of class or privilege, estimate it by what he can see of its practical results in making men richer, or bringing him more pleasure of the senses?

The world is ruled by ideas, by abstract thought. Society, literature, art, politics, in any given age are what the prevailing system of philosophy makes them. We recognize this clearly in studying any past period. We see, for instance, how all the currents of human life changed upon the adoption of the inductive method; no science, no literature, no art, practical or fine, no person, inquiring scholar, day laborer, trader, sailor, fine lady or humblest housekeeper, escaped the influence. Even though the prevailing ethics may teach that every man's highest duty is to himself, we cannot escape community of sympathy and destiny in this cold-blooded philosophy.

No social or political movement stands by itself. If we inquire, we shall find one preponderating cause underlying every movement of the age. If the utilitarian spirit is abroad, it accounts for the devotion to the production of wealth, and to the consequent separation of classes and the discontent, and it accounts also for the demand that all education shall be immediately useful. I was talking the other day with a lady who was doubting what sort of an education to give her daughter, a young girl of exceedingly fine mental capacity. If she pursued a classical course, she would, at the age of twenty-one, know very little of the sciences. And I said, why not make her an intellectual woman? At twenty-one, with a trained mind, all knowledges are at one's feet.

## Page 13

If anything can correct the evils of devotion to money, it seems to me that it is the production of intellectual men and women, who will find other satisfactions in life than those of the senses. And when labor sees what it is that is really most to be valued, its discontent will be of a nobler kind.